

**Cross-Cultural Competence and Strain in the Military:
The Role of Emotion Regulation and Optimism**

Bianca Trejo



DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Directed by Dr. Daniel P. McDonald, Director of Research

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As our world becomes more integrated and diverse, the increased need for selecting, training, and evaluating individuals' cross-cultural performance becomes critical. In a military context, the importance of determining cross-cultural competence is clear: to improve military members' ability to perform successfully across a range of military missions, regardless of where they are located. This study investigated the role of emotional regulation and optimism in the development of cross-cultural competence in the military. In addition, the impact of cross-cultural competence on strain was examined. In an initial sample of 233 military and nonmilitary members, an exploratory factor analysis was used to test the model of cross-cultural competence. Findings showed that cross-cultural competence was best defined by four factors (i.e., connecting skill, cultural perspective-taking, organizational awareness, and cultural knowledge). This model was further confirmed in a different sample comprised of 247 military and nonmilitary members, by a confirmatory factor analysis using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) analysis software. The results indicated that individuals who are better at regulating their emotions were more cross-culturally competent, which in turn resulted in lower levels of strain. The results also affirmed that optimism mediated the relationship between emotional regulation and cross-cultural competence. Individuals who were able to regulate their emotions effectively expressed greater optimism, which in turn increased cross-cultural competence. Findings also show that cross-cultural competence mediated the relationship between optimism and strain, suggesting that individuals who were more optimistic were more cross-culturally competent, which in turn related to lower strain. Overall, results demonstrate the importance of optimism and emotional regulation in the development of cross-cultural competence and resistance to strain, which can be extremely important for military members and expatriates to operate effectively and successfully accomplish their mission.